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AIR UNIVERSITY

AIR FORCE CIVILIAN SENIOR LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

by

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Billy Webb is currently a student at the Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, AL. He is one of eleven U.S. civil service employees selected for the college's 2008 academic year.

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Introduction

*"The growth and **development** of people is the highest calling of leadership."*
Harvey S. Firestone

Gen Jumper, Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) issued a sight picture statement on 2 May 2003 concerning Civilian Force Development. Below is an excerpt from his statement:

> Our Civilian Force Development flows from the same principals that govern our uniformed programs, taking into account the more functionally oriented system that governs civilian personnel management. The goal of Civilian Force Development is to identify cross-functional paths that will expose our civilians to a broader scope of Air Force operational activities in preparations for leadership positions…[1]

While Gen Jumper's sight picture recognizes the need to grow civilians for leadership positions, there is a more compelling reason for the Air Force to focus on civilian leadership development. The civilian workforce is getting older. A 2001 research study perform by the Center for the Organizational Research reported 46.3% of the government workers were 45 years or older.[2] That was over six years ago! The aging workforce picture for the Senior Executive Service (SES) is even more alarming. During a SES leader forum held in April 2007, the discussion was centered around how to attract the generation "X"ers in the SES ranks because 75% of today's SESers are 60 years or older.[3] In a September 2007 e-mail to the author, Mr. John Steenbock, Deputy Director, Civilian Force Integration, Air Force Personnel Center, reports that 22% of the Air Forces SES leaders are retirement eligible today and 62% are eligible within the next five years. At the strategic level (GS-15 or upper tier of NSPS pay band 3) and operation level (GS-14 or lower to mid tier of NSPS pay band 3) leadership positions, 16% are

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[1] General Jumper, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Chief's Sight Picture, 2 May 2003
[2] *The Aging-and-Retiring Government Workforce*, 32, http://www.wagnerbriefing.com/downloads/CPS_AgeBubble_ExecutiveSummary.pdf (accessed 3 October 2007)
[3] *Getting the "X" Into Senior Executive Service*, April 10, 2007, http://www.opm.gov/ses/pdf/GettingXintoSES.pdf (accessed 3 October 2007)

retirement eligible today and 41% within the next five years.[4] This data is startling as analysis of it predicts the Air Force will experience a civilian leadership exodus in the near future and it demands an aggressive plan to develop tomorrow's future leaders.

Years to retirement	SES Supervisory	SES Non-Supervisory	Pay Band 3 Supervisory	Pay Band 3 Non Supervisory
Within 1 to 5 years	40%	29%	25%	18%
Current year	5.5%	3%	3%	3%
1 to 5 years past eligibility	14%	15%	10%	9%
Greater than 5 years past	2.5%	12%	3%	3%
	62% (125)	**59% (39)**	**41% (1542)**	**33% (914)**

Table 1
2007 to 2012 Air Force Civilian Retirement Eligibility

This paper will first explore the age old question, are leaders born or are leaders made. Next, it will compare the private sector midlevel (i.e. operational), upper level (i.e. strategic) and executive level leadership development with the Air Force civilian leadership development process and use the comparison to validate the Air Force development process. This paper will also explore the major challenges associated with the leadership development process. The challenges are advanced academic degree opportunities to include DLAMP, providing opportunities for cross-functional and joint experience, and establishing a correlation between who is being developed and who is being promoted. Finally, this paper will provide corporate level recommended solutions to overcome the identified challenges.

Leadership

"Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth."[5] Ralph Stogdill listed 4,725 studies of leadership in the 1974 printing *Handbook of Leadership*. From

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[4] Steenbock, John, AFPC/DPI, Randolph AFB, TX. To the author. E-mail. 21 September 2007
[5] J.M. Burns, *Leadership* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1978), 20

his research, he concluded, "the endless accumulation of empirical data has not produced an integrated understanding of leadership."[6] This begs the question, what is leadership? The definition for leadership is elusive as it tends to change from one institution to another. Merriam-Webster defines leadership as 1) the office or position of a leader, 2) capacity to lead, and 3) the act or an instance of leading.[7] Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1-1 defines leadership as "…the art and science of influencing and directing people to accomplish the assigned mission."[8] Additional examples of how leadership has been defined are listed below:

- "a complex process by which a person influences others to accomplish a mission, task, or objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent"[9]
- "the influence people exercise over each other"[10]
- "influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation while operating to accomplish the mission and improve the organization"[11]
- "the exercise of authority, whether formal or informal, in directing and coordinating the work of others"[12]

While the definitions for leadership vary, they all have a common thread in that leadership is about leading whether by influence or authority. Which raises a question, is leadership an innate skill that some are born with or is leadership a learned skill? It was once widely believed that leaders are born and not made; however, that view is less widely held today.[13] Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus conducted a research study of high-powered successful leaders. As part of the

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[6] Ralph Stodgill, *Handbook of Leadership,* (New York: The Free Press, 1974), vii.

[7] Merriam-Webster on-line Dictionary, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/leadership, (accessed 29 September 2007)

[8] Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2006

[9] Donald Clark, "*Big Dog's Leadership Page,*" http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leadcon.html (accessed 29 September 2007)

[10] J. Steven Ott, *Classic Readings in Organization Behavior,* (Belmount, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1989), 243

[11] Department of the Army, Army Field Manual 22-100, *Army Leadership Doctrine*, Washington DC, (31 August 1999) 1-4

[12] J.M. Shafriz, *The Dorsey Dictionary of Politics and Government*, (Chicago, IL: The Dorsey Press, 1988), 318

[13] Thomas E. Cronin, "*Thinking and Learning about Leadership.*" Presidential Studies Quarterly, XIV, no. 1 (winter 1984) 22

study, they conducted of a series of 90 interviews, 30 with exceptional leaders from the private sector and 60 with successful CEOs. They found these leaders had very little in common aside from the fact all of them held a firm belief in marriage as an institution. Bennis and Nanus could not find a set of common characteristics that each of leaders were born with that linked them to becoming successful as leaders. In short, their study concludes that people can be developed into leaders. Below is an excerpt from their conclusion:

> The truth is that major capacities and competencies of leadership can be learned, and we are all educable, at least if the basic desire to lead is there and we do not suffer from serious learning disorders. Furthermore, whatever natural endowments we bring to the role of leadership, can be enhanced. Nurture is far more important than nature in determining who becomes a successful leader. This is not to suggest that it is easy to learn to be a leader. There is no simple formula, no rigorous science, no cookbook that leads inexorably to successful leadership. Instead, it is a deeply human process, full of trial and error, victories and defeats, timing and happenstance, intuition and insight.[14]

Their conclusion is supported in Barry J. Wolfson's article, *It's True - Lead and They Will Follow*, where he states; "One of the greatest myths in management education is that leaders are born and not made. While specific characteristics of some leaders such as charisma might be considered part of a person's personality, most of the capacities and competencies of leadership can in fact be learned."[15]

While it may be true in a few cases leaders are born, the facts presented above proposes that good people with potential can be developed into high-quality leaders. If a person has courage, judgment, integrity, willingness, and self-discipline, they can be developed through training, education, and experience to become a successful leader. Leadership development then becomes a continual process for an organization as well as for an individual. Consequently, the

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[14] Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategtiges for Taking Charge,* (NY: Harper and Row, 1985) 25-26

[15] Barry J. Wolfson, "*It's True - Lead and They Will Follow*," n.p. http://www.strategyletter.com/CD0602/featured_article.html (accessed 14 October 2007)

organization must create and implement a leadership succession plan to grow those employees who exhibit leadership potential.

Leadership Development

Now that it has been established people can be developed into leaders, there are two questions that require answering: how are people developed and who should be developed? In the past, while the U.S. society was not as mobile as today, corporations and government agencies did not give a lot of thought or effort in developing people to be future leaders. According to Robert Fulmer and Jay Conger in their book *Growing Your Company's Leadesr: How Great Organizations Use Succession Management to Sustain Competitive Advantage,* succession planning in major corporations was no more sophisticated than a list of names of potential candidates or heir apparents who could step into a leadership position when someone retired, took another job, or passed.[16] With an ever increasing mobile society, an aging workforce, Generation Xers coming of age, and globalization, the demand for trained, educated, and experienced leaders has never been greater. Therefore, the antiquated method of an heir apparent leadership approach is no long applicable. In today's competitive environment, companies who employ competency-based models as part of their leadership development and succession planning process have found that they provide a variety of benefits which include retention of their best and brightest. Fulmer and Conger state that successful competency-based models must do the following:

- Convey clear expectations for roles and for levels of performance
- Link development activities to organizational goals
- Motivate employees to improve by providing specific guidelines for professional development

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[16] Fulmer, Robert M., and Conger, Jay A, *Growing Your Company's Leaders* : *How Great Organizations Use Succession Management to Sustain Competitive Advantage*, (New York, NY: AMACOM Books, 2004) 4

- Protect the morale of both supervisors and subordinates by quantifying performance management
- Provide a common framework and language for discussing how to implement and communicate key talent and leadership development strategies
- Help set expectations for current senior leaders and/or serve as development targets for those in the organization who aspire to become a senior leader in the future[17]

Private Sector - Dow and Motorola

Dow is a perfect case study example of a major corporation using a competency model for their leadership development and succession planning. Dow's succession planning process has been in place since 1997. Dow defines a future leader as an employee who excels in all the company's functional competencies as well as in a subset of the global competencies reflected in its hybrid competency and experience, called "international effectiveness." Through targeted employee development, Dow prepares candidates to assume leadership positions. The company's goal is to grow 5 percent of the professional or managerial population as future leaders ensuring they have a diverse mix in gender and race in the selection. There are four stages of professional development at Dow. They have tagged them as acquiring (equates to the Air Force PALACE Acquire program), applying (equates to Air Force tactical level), leveraging (equates to Air Force operational and strategic level), and visioning (equates to the Air Force SES level) *stages.* The acquiring stage begins upon the employee's entry into the workforce. Through an entry-level development plan, the employee progresses through the acquiring stage into the applying stage. The applying stage is the level attained by all employees who stay with the organization and is the level where the wheat is separated from the chaff: it is this stage where the future leaders are recognized and they begin their development. The future leader candidates are those employees who have demonstrated accelerated development in the company's critical competencies. There are two indicators used in the selection of future leaders. First, the

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[17] Ibid, 49

employee has demonstrated they learn jobs faster than their peers do. Second, the employee's

contributions to the organization have greater results than their peers. As the future leader

progresses through the leveraging and visioning stages, the employee receives management

training, education, and various global market experiences. Dow's leadership development

process has provided the corporation with a competent, talented, and experienced succession

leadership pool.[18]

Motorola is another major corporation which has recognized the need to develop its

workforce and grow future leaders using a competency-based development model. Below is

their career planning and development vision:

> Career planning and development focuses both on performance development for the current
> role and career development for future roles. The intent is to create an environment in
> which developmental activity is perceived as a good thing—a visible investment in talent
> and the future of the organization. Development options are several, including, for
> example, mentoring, executive coaching, expansion of job scope, transfer to a new job
> offering specific development opportunities, special projects, in-class or Internet-based
> coursework, lateral job rotations, assignment in an "office of" or "assistant" role, and
> international assignments.[19]

By applying a competency-based model for leadership development and succession

planning process similar to Dow, Motorola is building a leadership candidate pool for the future.

Both companies emphasize that senior and executive level leaders need to possess a broad range

of experience crossing key divisions of the corporation as well as advanced education.

Sister Services - Army and Navy

Before delving into an in-depth review of the Air Force civilian leadership

development process, an overview of the Army and Navy programs will be provided to

give a perspective of how the Air Force's sister services are developing their future

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[18] Ibid, 178-183

[19] Louis Carter, David Ulrich, and Marshall Goldsmith, Best Practices in Leadership
Development and Organization Change : How the Best Companies Ensure Meaningful Change
and Sustainable Leadership (San Francisco CA, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005), 338

civilian leaders. Both the Army and Navy use the Defense Leadership and Management Program (DLAMP) to prepare proven employees for senior level leadership positions. DLAMP is a comprehensive program in which the participants are given five years to complete. The core elements are:

- An advanced degree from an accredited institution
- Graduate courses in business management and public policy areas
- Professional Military Education (senior level)
- Leadership courses designed to enhance executive core qualifications
- Developmental assignment [20]

Each of the services uses a competitive boarding process to determine who will participate in the program. The board members review the employee's records for experience, education, self-development, and unit commander's recommendation as the selection factor criteria. While both services have a process in place to develop civilians who have demonstrated they have leadership potential, there was no linkage in the regulations, instructions, or processes to promoting the employees being developed.

In addition to DLAMP, the Army has adopted a requirements-based model to ensure the basic core competencies are achieved in developing their civilian leadership core. The Army's process is called Army Civilian Training, Education, and Development System (ACTEDS) and is used to develop people for the mid-management and leadership level. ACTEDS is

> "…a requirements-based system that ensures planned development of civilians through a blending of progressive and sequential work assignments, formal training, educational courses, and self-development for individuals as they progress from entry level to key positions. ACTEDS provides an orderly, systematic approach to technical, professional, and leadership training, education, and development similar to the military system." [21]

For further leadership growth, the Army has a senior level development system called the Army Senior Fellow Program. According to Ms Ruth Gurr, from the Army Education and Training

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[20] The Department of Defense, Civilian Personnel Management Service, *The DLAMP Program*, http://www.cpms.osd.mil/jldd/dlamp_index.aspx (accessed 21 October 2007)
[21] Army Regulation (AR) 690-950, *Civilian Personnel Career Management*, December 2001, 2

Office, successful mid-level (operational) and senior level (strategic) managers at the GS-13 through GS-15 grades or equivalent National Security Personnel System pay banded levels may compete for enrollment into the program and selection is accomplished through a rigorous central board process. The goal of the program is to deliberately develop the Army's high potential civilians to be competitive for the SES rank. Some of the key areas of the program for the continuing development of the selectees includes rotational assignment to gain a wider range of experience at the operational and strategic levels, advanced degrees and professional military education if not already obtained, and stretch assignments to hone the civilian leader's skills.[22]

The Navy's SECNAV Instruction 12410.24, *Civilian Leadership Development*, is its over arching guidance for developing future civilian leaders. The Navy process starts with the employee completing an Individual Leadership Development Plan. The employee and his supervisor-mentor assess the plan during the annual performance review cycle. Together they evaluate performance, training and education the employee has accomplished over the course of the year. All of the employee's accomplishments are recorded in the employee's records and if he or she is successful in acquiring the requirements for the next level position, he or she may compete for any job vacancy for which he or she qualifies. [23] The leadership education and training, to include funding, is the responsibility of the Navy's different Commands with the exception of the DLAMP process. As previously mentioned, the Navy uses DLAMP for leadership development. However, it does not have a program such as the Army's ACTED to further develops its personnel for SES level positions.[24]

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[22] Ruth Gurr (U.S. Army), telephone interview by author, 28 January 2008
[23] SECNAV Instruction 12410.24, *Civilian Leadership Development*, August 1995, np
[24] Interview with employee from Navy Personnel Command, 20 January 2008

Air Force Civilian Leadership Development Process

In the previous section, this paper provided a quick overview of two private sector companies' leadership development process and an overview of the Army and Navy's development process. The natural question to ask is how does the Air Force's process compare with the private sector and sister services in regards to developing a group of high-potential civilians for operational and strategic level leadership positions?

Before the above question can be answered, it is necessary to examine the Air Force's civilian leadership development process. Prior to Gen Jumper's 2 May 2003 Civilian Force Development sight picture, the seventeen major career fields (e.g. contracting, personnel, logistics, civil engineering) had their own policies for developing their civilian employees for leadership positions within the respective career fields. While many of the individual career field developmental policies were similar, they were not cohesive parallel policies which would allow an employee to develop as a senior leader in one career field and become competitive for a leadership position in another career field. However, after Gen Jumper issued the 2 May 2003 sight picture, a new policy was developed which standardized civilian leadership development while allowing the career fields the flexibility to define their respective technical core competencies.

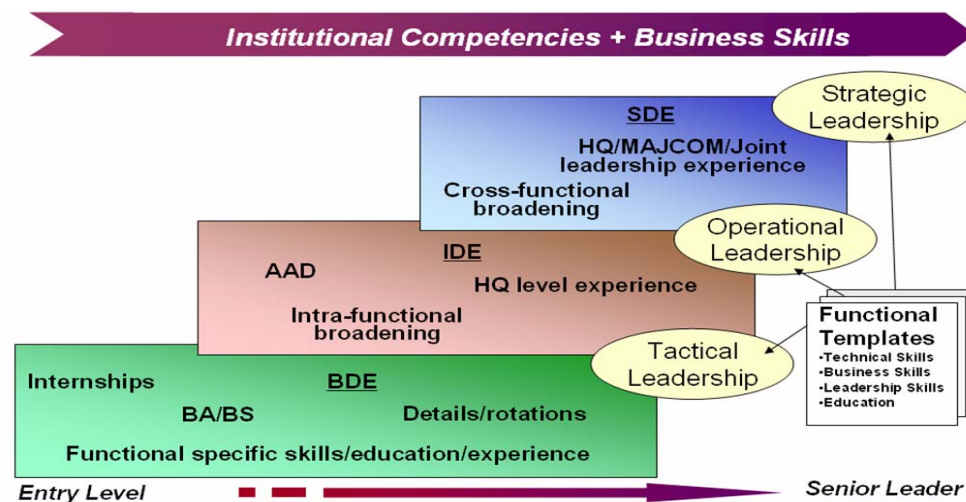## Civilian Force Development Concept of Operations

On 7 February 2006, Gen Moseley, Chief of Staff of the Air Force approved the Civilian Force Development Concept of Operations (CFD-CONOPS) guide. The CFD-CONOPS established a set of guidelines used in establishing a career path to prepare Department of the Air Force civilians for leadership positions. The key component of the CFD-CONOPS is the

requirement for each career-field to build developmental templates for the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. The template requirements are:

- Competency Based (leadership, business, and technical skills and education)
- Provide consistency across career-fields
- Consistent with officer development and Air Force Doctrine
- Integrated at the senior levels with the SES accessions template[25]

It is important to point out that the leadership competencies were corporately defined because the competencies are the major strength of the templates. The leadership competencies build a common foundation across all career fields by identifying the leadership skills the Air Force expects all senior civilian leaders to possess. In addition, because the templates identify the competencies, skills, and education required for each of the different levels, the templates provide the basis for each of the career fields to develop career mapping from the tactical level to the strategic level. Uniformed templates lead to uniformed career progression paths. Figure 1 below is an excerpt from the CFD-CONOPS. It depicts the notional career developmental path starting at the tactical level and progressing through to the strategic level.[26]

Figure 1. Career Development Pathways
Note: BDE/IDE/SDE needs can overlap

[25] Air Force, Civilian Force Development CFD-CONOPS, January, 2006, 8
[26] Ibid, 9

Figure 1 indicates when the employee reaches the operational level, the employee should have earned an advanced degree or be in the process of obtaining it and gaining intra-functional experience. Additionally, as the employee moves into the strategic level, management should provide opportunities for cross-functional career broadening experience to better prepare him for a strategic level position having responsibility for more than one career field.

The templates and the career development paths tie in with the four major tenets of CFD-CONOPS which are career development plan (CDP) process, developmental positions, developmental education requirements, and promotion policy. The CDP process consists of three major components and three major stakeholders. The three major components are a civilian development plan, development team (DT) assessment of the plan, and direct feedback to the employee. The three major stakeholders are the employee, the first level supervisor, and the DT. It is necessary to elaborate on the DT and the CDP to understand the CDP process. The DT is a career-field specific board established to provide deliberate and connected career development to meet corporate Air Force and career-field requirements. In addition, it helps individuals to develop and reach their full potential. [27]

The CDP is a web-based tool which is used by the civilian employee, management, and the DT in an attempt to assess the needs of the Air Force against the employee's qualification and desires. The employee submits his career experience, education level, and desires for the next three career experiences. Next, the supervisor adds his assessment and recommendations in the supervisor comments section of the CDP and finally the information is evaluated by the appropriate career field DT and a developmental assessment vector is provided as well as

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[27] Air Force, A Guide to Civilian Career Field Management, April 2006, 4-5

education recommendations. The vectors are ready, groom, on-track, and current assignment.[28]
In summary, similar to Dow and Motorola's process, the CDP process identifies the high-potential employees who should be groomed or are ready for the next assignment to include intra-functional or cross-functional experiences. The process also identifies those employees who should compete for Air Force funded developmental educational opportunities.

The next focus is on developmental education requirements. The CFD-CONOPS provides a general framework for civilian education and training requirements. It indicates all civilian employees should receive basic leadership courses, all tactical leaders should receive basic developmental education such as Squadron Officer School and basic business skills courses. It also recommends all operational leaders receive intermediated development education (IDE) such as Air Command and Staff College, Air Force Legislative Fellows, or DoD Executive Leadership Development Program. In addition, the CFD-CONOPS recommends all upper tier operational level and strategic level leaders should receive senior development education (SDE) such as Air War College, National War College, or the Industrial College of the Armed Forces and advanced degrees.[29] The advanced academic degrees include Harvard, MIT, Princeton, Stanford and AFIT in-residence programs, although the number of positions funded is extremely limited.

Dow's leadership development process includes the employee and supervisor preparing written development plan that is reviewed by the Corporate Operating Board (COB) when the employee is nominated by their leader. The COB engages to select candidates for development

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[28] Air Force, *Civilian Force Development CFD-CONOPS*, January, 2006, 13-14. Ibid, 6
[29] Air Force, *Civilian Force Development CFD-CONOPS*, January, 2006, 13-14.

opportunities to include education and experience.[30] Correspondingly, the Air Force has an established process for identifying and selecting candidates for developmental educations opportunities. As mentioned earlier, the DT board reviews the employee's CDP. As part of the review, the board will provide development recommendations to the employee based on the current level the employee has achieved, the supervisor's inputs, the board's assessment of the employee, the employee's goals, and the needs of the Air Force. In most cases, the DT will encourage the civilian to seek professional military education through correspondence or seminar. The employees who are validated by the DT as having leadership potential are encouraged to complete a package to compete for IDE, SDE, or academic in-residence opportunities.

How does the deliberate development of an employee tie in with who is being promoted? The promotion policy as written in the CFD-CONOPS states; "Successful Civilian Force Development requires a strong correlation between who is developed and who is promoted. All career fields must implement consistent promotion plan policies that credit competency development in line with development templates and the Force Development construct. Credit for CDE (Civilian Development Education) will be standardized across career fields."[31] While the policy does not guarantee the person being developed will be promoted, it sends a message that consideration should be given to promote those who are being developed.

Air Force Leadership Development Compared to Dow and Motorola

Circling back to the question, how does the Air Force's process as outlined in the CFD-CONOPS, compare with the private sector in regards to developing a group of targeted high-

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[30] Fulmer, Robert M., and Conger, Jay A, Growing Your Company's Leaders : *How Great Organizations Use Succession Management to Sustain Competitive Advantage*, (New York, NY: AMACOM Books, 2004) 184

[31] Ibid, 12.

potential civilians for operational and strategic level leadership positions? The answer is the process parallels the leadership model used by Dow and Motorola as it is competency based, development of high-potential employees, and requires multi-dimensional experience and education for the most senior leadership positions.   In addition, the Air Force's process parallels both companies through the DT training and education selection boards by ensuring the high performing civilian employees who have demonstrated leadership potential are selected for leadership development options.

Air Force Civilian Leadership Developmental Challenges

Although the Air Force has an approved and codified process for developing its future civilian leaders, it faces significant challenges with the implementation of the CFD-CONOPS. The challenges are advanced academic degree opportunities and senior leadership development training to include DLAMP and CSLP, cross-functional opportunities, and linking promotion consideration to employees who are being developed. The major obstacle the first two challenges is funding constraints while the third is the lack of official Air Force written policy.

Advanced Academic Degree, DLAMP and CSLP

Similar to the Dow program, once a career path is established, the next focus is on developmental education requirements. As identified earlier, the CFD-CONOPS provides a general framework for civilian education and training requirements. It indicates all civilian employees should receive basic leadership courses; all tactical leaders should receive basic developmental education such as Squadron Officer School and basic business skills courses. All operational leaders should receive IDE, and all strategic level leaders should receive senior development education SDE. The majority of these opportunities are professional military education (PME). For example in 2005, the Air Force funded 63 in-resident training positions

for civilians, of the 63, 55 of the training positions were for PME while eight were for advanced academic degrees. [32]

The issue here is, the CFD-CONOPS notional templates for both the operational and strategic level positions for civilian development require both a master's degree in engineering, systems acquisition management, business administration or related degree and civilian development education in IDE or SDE.[33] Given the limited number of funded in-resident advanced academic degrees opportunities, it is time for the Air Force to consider other options for providing advanced degree opportunities for the leadership development of targeted employees.

A related issue is for the last four years the Air Force has not funded any DLAMP positions. Similar to the rigorous development program describe for Dow, the DLAMP program is an executive development program which provides the participants with strong leadership and management skills, joint perspectives, and senior level military acculturation. The Air Force needs to review its current policy of opting out of participation in the DLAMP program. If it should elect to continue with its current policy of non-participation in DLAMP, then it must consider an Air Force internal program option to develop a highly qualified pool of candidates who will be ready to step into leadership positions when the current senior leaders begin their retirement exodus. The program must have similar education and experience requirements as offered in the DLAMP program to prepare the recognized mid level leadership core for senior level leadership appointments such as the GS-15 or the NSPS equivalent positions.

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[32] Mr. Henry Snider, AFPC/DPK Mission Brief (brief, CE Policy Council, Arlington, VA, 5 November 2004)
[33] Ibid

Similar to the Army Senior Fellow Program, the Air Force has the Civilian Strategic Leaders Program (CSLP), formally known as the GS-15 Leadership Development program. The program's goal is to prepare the selected high potential GS-15 or NSPS equivalent leaders to be competitive for the SES ranks. The Air Force has identified specific positions that belong to CSLP; meaning only CSLP program candidates are considered for CSLP identified positions. When an employee enters one of the positions, they are required to sign a mobility agreement. Under the mobility agreement, the Air Force can move the employee to another position in the same geographical area or a different geographic location. If the employee refuses, the Air Force can elect to separate them. However, the Air Force rarely enforces the agreement. In addition to controlling who is eligible for consideration of one of these key leadership development positions, CSLP provides strategic level leadership training opportunities such as Harvard's Senior Executive Fellows or Federal Executive Institute's Leadership for a Democratic Society. However, the program's training budget has been under funded; consequently, the people who have been identified for senior level development are not receiving the required training.

Cross-Functional/Joint Experience

Similar to Dow and Motorola's leadership development models which require the employee to gain experience across the company's departmental boundaries, the Air Force CFD-CONOPS identifies a need for cross-functional experience to prepare the high potential employee for senior leadership position. Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1, Leadership and Force Development, also supports this experience requirement as indicated in the following excerpt;

> "…Force development programs specify how the Air Force leverages its investment in
> its people. The Air Force has determined there are clearly identifiable skill
> requirements for Airmen who have experiences in more than one connected career area.
> Force development defines the occupational skill combinations and then facilitates the

education, training, and assignment processes to produce a sufficient capability within the personnel inventory…"[34]

The CFD-CONOPS states the following concerning experiences beyond the employee's primary career field; "Experiential development is a critical part of implementing Civilian Force Development. Developmental positions are needed for broadening (intra- and cross-functional), staff experience (MAJCOM HQ and SAF/HAF) and leadership development."[35] Additionally, there is an emerging requirement for joint assignment experience. Mr. Paul Parker, SES, HQ AF/A7C Deputy, stated in an interview, the Air Force not only needs to prepare its future civilian leaders with cross-functional experience but also with joint experience such as NORTHCOM or PACOM.[36] His insight was confirmed by a high ranking official from the Department of Defense, who addressed the Air War College students on 1 November 2007. The official stated, "Future senior leaders, both military and civilian, must have joint experience."[37] Additionally, in a telephone interview with Army and Navy personnel, both service representatives stated joint service experience was a desirable that their future senior civilian leaders have joint assignments in their records.[38,39] Hence, the Air Force must consider options to establish and fund billets for cross-functional positions and to collaborate with the sister services to establish joint service assignments in order to provide the breadth of experience required for future senior civilian leaders.

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[34] AFDD 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2006, 21.
[35] Air Force, *Civilian Force Development CFD-CONOPS*, January, 2006, 11
[36] Mr. Paul Parker (USAF), telephone interview by author, 24 October 2007
[37] Speaker from Department of Defense, (lecture Air War College, Maxwell AFB, AL, November 2007 brief – AWC)
[38] Ruth Gurr (U.S. Army), telephone interview by author, 28 January 2008
[39] Interview with employee from Navy Personnel Command, 20 January 2008

Development-Promotion Correlation

Dow and Motorola's promotion philosophy is to promote the employees who have proven themselves and the corporation has made an investment in their development. Dow measures its success rate by comparing the number of internal development candidates selected versus external candidate selected for their leveraging and visioning positions (operational and strategic level with respect to the Air Force). As of 2002, 80 percent of the selections were from the internal development candidate pool.[40] As mentioned previously, the Air Force promotion policy as written in the CFD-CONOPS states that there must be a strong correlation between who is developed and who is promoted.[41] However, with today's Air Force civilian promotion process there is no direct correlation in the selection process between who is being promoted and who is being developed.

Under the current promotion system, a manager submits a request to fill a vacant position through the civilian personnel system. When the job is announced for a career field, there are no restrictions on who can apply. After the job announcement closes, the manager or selecting official receives a list of qualified candidates who requested to be considered for the position. However, there is no indication as to which candidates are being developed for leadership positions and there is no requirement for the selecting official to make any effort to find out if any of the candidates are in the career field's leadership development candidate pool. There is a major disconnect between policy and current practice. The Air Force must change its current promotion practices ensuring the personnel it is developing are being considered for promotion.

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[40] Fulmer, Robert M., and Conger, Jay A, Growing Your Company's Leaders : *How Great Organizations Use Succession Management to Sustain Competitive Advantage*, (New York, NY: AMACOM Books, 2004) 188

[41] Air Force, *Civilian Force Development CFD-CONOPS*, January, 2006, 12

Options

Although the Air Force is facing the above challenges, there are an array of options the Air Force could adopt to confront and overcome the challenges. Selecting the right options would result in the ultimate goal of a trained and developed civilian candidate pool ready to step into strategic level leadership positions. In the following paragraphs, this paper will present a set of options for consideration in regards to the identified challenges.

Advanced Academic Degree

The notional leadership competencies as defined in the CFD-CONOPS for operational and strategic level positions require both PME education and an advanced academic degree.[42] However, with a finite training budget, the Air Force does not have the resources to fund both in-residence PME and in-residence academic programs for the civilians it has selected to develop for leadership positions. There are three options provided below for the Air Force leaders to consider with respect to providing opportunities for advanced academic degree and Air Force participation in DLAMP.

Option 1 is status quo. It assumes that employees who are of senior leadership caliber will be resourceful enough to obtain the necessary education and experience requirements to achieve the leadership level they aspire to reach. Obviously, this option will have no impact to civilian training budget. However, this option limits the number of people who are being developed for leadership positions.

Option 2 provides a strategy which would allow more in-resident advanced degree opportunities with minimum associated cost to the current Air Force civilian training budget. Assuming most of the employees the DT would select for academic development are employed

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[42] Ibid, 19-20

either at the operational or strategic levels, the employee would be assigned to a Major

Command, Field Operating Agency, or Air Staff. These installations are located in metropolitan

areas that have accredited universities with advanced degree programs. Therefore, the Air Force

could permit the selected employee to pursue an advanced degree full time in the local

commuting area. Instead of being in temporary duty status as the employee would be if they

attend an in-residence PME course outside their commuting area, the employee would be in

long-term full time training status in the local area. This would save the Air Force the temporary

duty (TDY) cost associated with the in-residence cost for civilian employees. The TDY cost

savings could then be used to offset the in-residence tuition costs. The employee would be able

to complete the PME requirement through correspondence. With both a master's degree and

PME, the employee would be competitive for strategic level positions. Therefore, this option

recommends the Air Force reduce the number of in-residence PME positions for civilians and

add long-term full-time training opportunities as described above. While this is a viable option

and provides more advanced degree opportunities, it has a down side as it reduces the number of

in-residence PME opportunities.

Option 3 was developed after interviews with four SES Air Force civilian leaders. They

were asked the following question:

> As part of leadership development, the career fields place an emphasis on
> advanced academic degrees and Professional Military Education (PME). Given that the
> rules have changed and the Air Force now allows civilians to compete for long term full
> time training (i.e. in residence) at a local universities, which do you believe to be more
> beneficial towards leadership development in-residence advanced academic degree or in-
> residence PME and why?[43]

Mr. Paul Parker responded that if the choice were between in-residence PME versus in-

residence advanced academic degree, he would select the PME option. He based this choice on

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[43] Notes, Professional Study Paper development, Billy P. Webb, 12 October 2007

the following reasons. First, it gives the civilian member a better understanding of the warrior culture and some joint exposure. Second, it provides additional Air Force acculturation for the employee which will allow them to better integrate with military leadership. Finally, it helps to build credibility with their military peers.[44] Ms Chris Puckett, HQ SAF/AXQ, responded that in-residence PME experience is invaluable as the experience provides the civilian with a better understanding of the military leadership and culture while providing exposure to title 10 and title 32 differences and it provides the employee with a different perspective of world events through the lens of the foreign national officers.[45] Ms Kathleen Ferguson, SAF/IEI, responded there is no substitution to the experience and knowledge the civilian gains from the PME experience.[46] Similarly, Mr. Michael Aimone, HQ AF/A4 Deputy, responded there is no substitute for the relationships and the networking that the employee establishes while attending a PME course. The experience and network established will benefit the employee for the remainder of his career.[47] Therefore, option three is a status quo position with respect to the number of in-residence PME and in-residence advanced academic degrees opportunities. However, it recommends that the DTs identify employees who are to be developed and require advance academic degrees for further development be given priority consideration by the tuition assistance program. This option will provide the Air Force with a pool of qualified candidates who have demonstrated a potential for strategic level leadership while meeting the intent of the Force Development construct of deliberate and connected development of the civilian component of the Total Force.

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[44] Mr. Paul Parker (USAF), telephone interview by author, 24 October 2007
[45] Ms. Chris Puckett (USAF), telephone interview by author, 02 November 2007
[46] Ms Kathleen Ferguson (USAF), telephone interview by author, 27 November 2007
[47] Mr. Michael Aimone (USAF), telephone interview by author, 15 November 2007

DLAMP and CSLP

When asked about DLAMP, both Mr. Aimone and Mr. Parker stated from their experience with the program, they observed the wrong group of individuals was being targeted for DLAMP as the individuals being selected for the program already had 50% or more of the development requirements in their portfolios.[48,49] Ms Chris Puckett, indicated the Air Force opted out of the DLAMP for the past four years because the program has been going through a transformation process to include joint experience. She went on to say, the Air Force is unsure what the program will consist of in the future. Therefore, the Air Force made a conscious decision to go-it-alone.[50] Ms Ferguson confirmed Ms Puckett's statements when she responded, the Air Force civilian development program will provide the same if not better development opportunities as DLAMP.[51] Therefore, there are two viable options provided for consideration. Option 1 is to opt back into DLAMP. However, it is doubtful this option would gain support of Air Force senior leaders because as indicated from their responses above, the Air Force experience with DLAMP since its inception is the program did not meet expectations. The DLAMP shortfall leads directly to option 2.

Option 2 is the go-it-alone policy which means the Air Force will develop is own leadership program. Under this option, the Air Force must accelerate implementation of the development polices established in the CFD-CONOPS.

With the Air Force's decision to opt out of DLAMP, the CSLP program gains greater importance as it becomes the lone program to prepare candidates for SES core. However, CSLP is a broken process as described earlier. It is under funded and the mobility rule is not being

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[48] Ibid

[49] Mr. Paul Parker (USAF), telephone interview by author, 24 October 2007

[50] Ms. Chris Puckett (USAF), telephone interview by author, 02 November 2007

[51] Ms Kathleen Ferguson (USAF), telephone interview by author, 27 November 2007

enforced.   The easiest course of action to take is a status quo option; the do nothing option.

However, failing to provide future leaders with the opportunities to gain a diversity of experience

and education will not fix the problem; it will only get worse.

Option 2 is first enforce the rules. It is time for the Air Force to start rotating the senior

level GS-15s or NSPS equivalents out of their comfort zone and into cross-function positions in

order to create a fully qualified and experienced pool of candidates with fresh ideas for change

and improvements rather than the stale same old way of doing business attitude. Second, the Air

Force needs to fund senior leadership training requirements to prepare their high potential

leaders to be ready to step into the SES rank as the opportunity presents itself.

Cross-Functional/Joint Opportunities

Establishing cross-functional/joint opportunities for civilian employees is the most

difficult policy of the CFD-CONOPS to implement as several of the career fields are specialized

and narrowly focused, such as legal, security, and medical. However, there are career fields

which have similar basic educational requirements at the tactical level. For example, the science

and engineering career field and the civil engineer career field both have positions which require

a bachelor degree in engineering. The program management and the contracting career fields are

a pair which would be easy for cross-functional assignments because both have acquisition

related positions. The major obstacle to cross-functional/joint experience is no cross-functional

positions currently exist. The following three options are offered to the Air Force for

consideration.

Option 1 recommends the Air Staff highly encourage the various career fields to work

together in a collaborative effort to identify existing vacant funded manpower authorization to be

used as cross-functional/joint assignments. It also recommends an integrated strategic level DT

be established to manage the assignments to include identifying the employees who would be moved into the positions and to establish tour length. The benefit of this option is it lays a foundation for a cross-functional/joint assignment program. However, it does not guarantee any positions will be identified by the career fields for the program's use.

Option 2 recommends the Air Staff task each of major career fields who have the preponderance of civilian authorizations to identify two of their permanent positions for the cross-functional/joint assignment program. Like option 1, it recommends an integrated strategic level DT be established to manage the assignments to include identifying the employees who would be moved into the positions and the length of the tour. The benefit of this option is it establishes funded authorizations for a cross-functional/joint assignment program. The downside is it taxes the larger career fields to use existing positions from their manpower authorization in order to establish a viable cross-functional/joint assignment program.

Option 3 was developed after e-mail exchanges with Mr. John Steenbock, Deputy Director, Civilian Force Integration, Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC). In one of his e-mail communiqués, Mr. Steenbock stated AFPC had offered eight career broadener positions to the Air Force Executive Resource Board Development Panel (ERB-DP) for the purpose of providing selected civilians the opportunity to gain cross-functional experience.[52] Therefore, option 3 recommends the ERB-DP approve using the six of the eight career positions to establish a cross-functional program and the remaining two to establish a joint assignment program. However, while the career broadening positions are funded by AFPC, they are allocated to individual career fields for intra-functional employee development. Therefore, while this is a no cost

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[52] Steenbock, John, AFPC/DPI, Randolph AFB, ,TX. To the author. E-mail. 21 September 2007

option, it does have a downside as it reduces the number of intra-functional career broadening positions.

Development-Promotion Correlation

As mentioned previously, the CFD-CONOPS states there should be a correlation between who is being developed and who is being promoted. However, the Air Force has not established a process to link development with promotion. It should be noted that the intent of the development-promotion correlation does not guarantee the individual who is being developed will be promoted, but rather implies consideration for promotion. The following three options are provided for the Air Force's leaders to consider concerning establishing a development-promotion linkage for operational and strategic leadership positions.

Option 1 is truly a status quo option. Allow all qualified candidates who are referred for consideration under the self-nomination process to compete for the promotion. The current process as is does not differentiate between who is being developed by the Air Force and who is not. All candidates would compete on their own merits and the selection criteria is solely at the discretion of the selecting official. While this option definitely has merit as it allows for full and open competition, it defeats the purposes of a deliberate and connected leadership development process.

Option 2 recommends for all operational and strategic leadership positions, the selecting official be restricted to only considering qualified candidates who have been developed for leadership positions. This option is viable for positions which fall under the National Security Personnel System (NSPS). NSPS allows for the establishment of assessment boards which meet

to evaluate and recommend employees for positions in occupational groups. [53] Under this option, each of the career field DTs are provided NSPS assessment board authority. The assessment board would be tasked to develop the qualified lists on an annual basis or more frequently if required. When the assessment boards are developing the qualified list of candidates, they would ensure the list has a direct correlation to the candidates' development. The list would include the employees who are being deliberately developed and the employees who on their own initiative have self-developed. The DT assessment board could prepare the promotion lists when it meets to review the employees' CDPs as the team has the information required to construct an array of qualified candidate lists for filling vacant key leadership positions. The downside to this option is negligible as it prevents a commander from placing a civilian into a leadership position who it not on the qualified list.

Option 3 is a variation of options 1 and 2. This option recognizes there are cases where it is necessary to consider a wider range of candidates other than those who are on an assessment board list. For example, the selecting official may need to consider a wider range of candidates because the position is in a hard to fill location or requires a unique skill set. Therefore, under this option, the selecting official would first be provided with the qualified candidate list from the assessment board. If after reviewing the list, the selecting official can provide justification that additional candidates should be considered, the job would be announced Air Force wide for full and open competition. This option meets the intent of the CFD-CONOPS development-promotion policy and provides the selecting official when justified the flexibility to consider other candidates when required and doesn't have any measurable downside.

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[53] HR Elements for Managers, Supervisors, and Employees, *A Guide to NSPS*, spiral 1, version 3, 43, http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/docs/HRMSEMagazineS1V3.pdf (accessed 15 September 2007)

Recommendations and Conclusion

As previously identified, the CFD-CONOPS was approved in 2006 and consequently the Air Force is facing three major challenges with implementation. The first challenge is advanced academic degree opportunities to include reentering DLAMP. However, the DLAMP recommendation will be addressed after the third challenge. The second challenge is providing opportunities for cross-functional experience. The first two challenges are severely constrained by available resources. The third challenge, which is due to the lack of clear policy, requires establishing a correlation between who is being developed and who is being promoted.

Three options were explored for each of the challenges. With respect to advanced academic degree opportunities, the recommended course of action is option 3. It recommends the establishment of a new policy that would ensure any civilian employee who is identified by a DT to pursue an advance academic degree be given priority consideration in the tuition assistance program which is managed by AFPC. This option is the most viable of the three recommendations as it does not have any impact on the Air Force training budget, there is no impact on the civilian in-residence PME opportunities, and it provides an avenue for the high-potential employee to earn an advanced academic degree.

In regards to providing cross-functional/joint assignment opportunities, three options were proposed. The recommended course of action is option 3, which is for the ERB-DP approve using the six of the eight career positions being offered by AFPC to establish a cross-functional program and the remaining two to establish a joint assignment program. While this option does have a downside because it reduces the number of intra-functional career broadening positions, the impact is minimal as AFPC harvested vacant career broadening positions which

were new authorization and had not been distributed to any career field.[54] The benefit of this

option is it establishes authorizations for a cross-functional/joint assignment program which are

funded from AFPC's central salary account and does not take any career fields' permanent

authorization. Additionally, it meets the Air Force stated objective which is, "The goal of

Civilian Force Development is to identify cross-functional paths that will expose our civilian to a

broader scope of Air Force operational activities in preparations for leadership positions"[55]

Three options were also consider in meeting the challenge for establishing an association

between promotions and development. Option 3 is the recommended course of action. To

review, option 3 requires each career field's DT to develop a qualified list of candidates based on

NSPS guidance. The candidate list includes the employees who are being deliberately developed

for leadership positions and employees who have self-developed. The list would be provided to

the selecting official when there is a vacancy for key operational and strategic level positions.

The selecting official would be required to make a selection from the DT's qualified list of

candidates unless he can justify why additional candidates should be considered. This option is

the best of the three provided because it provides the required CFD-CONOPS link for the

development-promotion policy and provides the selecting official the flexibility to consider other

candidates when justified and approved.

Finally, addressing DLAMP and CSLP, two options were given for each. Concerning

DLAMP, one was an opt-in option and one was a go-it-alone option. The recommendation is the

go-it-alone option. Under this option, it is imperative the Air Force fully implement the

development policies established in the CFD-CONOPS and adapt the recommended courses of

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[54] Steenbock, John, AFPC/DPI, Randolph AFB, TX. To the author. E-mail. 21 September
2007
[55] General Jumper, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Chief's Sight Picture, 2 May 2003

actions laid out above to overcome the policy implementation challenges. Such action by the Air Force will provide it with a superior pool of qualified candidates ready to step into leadership positions as they become vacant.

For CSLP, the first option was status quo, sometimes status quo is a preferred option. This is not one of them. Option 2 is the recommended course of action, which is to enforce the mobility rule for the CSLP positions and to fund the CSLP training requirements. This option will provide the Air Force with the high caliber of candidates needed for SES accession.

In conclusion, Gen Jumper's 2 May 2003 sight picture recognized the need to establish a civilian development leadership program. The projected retirement data provided by AFPC not only supports a leadership development program it underscores the fact tomorrow's leaders need to begin development today. In response, Gen Moseley approved the Civilian Force Development Concept of Operations (CFD-CONOPS) guide which establishes Air Force policy for civilian leadership development. This paper provided a review of two case studies of successful leadership development programs from the private sector, Dow and Motorola. Their programs were compared against Air Force leadership development program as outlined in CFD-CONOPS. The result was the Air Force program parallels the two successful program case studies. The parallel highlights of the leadership development programs are: a) competency based, b) provide future leaders with opportunities for organizational acculturation and continuing education to include advanced degrees, c) require future leaders to gain experience in more than one major branch of the organization, and d) provide a relationship between leadership development and promotions.

Additionally, this paper examined the civilian leadership development process of the Army and Navy. In comparison, both the Air Force and Army senior leadership development

programs are ahead of the Navy because of their SES accession programs. The Army and Air Force programs are similar as they start developing the employee at the entry level and prepare the employees who have leadership potential for leadership positions. Their programs are designed to prepare a cadre of candidates who possess the experience, skills, and knowledge to step into intermediate through SES level positions.

While the Air Force has a validated leadership development program when compared to the private sector and sister services, having a validated program or process will not provided the Air Force with the caliber of civilian leaders it envisions having in the future. It is the implementation of the program and continual review and improvements to it, which are the keys to a successful program. To date the Air Force has failed to fully implement the processes identified in the CFD-CONOPS and CSLP. While there are numerous options for each of the above challenges, this paper has offered a simple solution set that is cost effective, realistic, and can be implemented immediately. When endorsed and employed, the Air Force will have a high-quality strategic level candidate pool it needs to replace civilian leadership as the predicted exodus begins in the near future.

Finally, the best way to wrap up the general thesis of this paper is with the following excerpt from AFDD 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*. "Developing a leadership succession process that serves organizational needs and meets the expectations of motivated individuals drives the Air Force to pursue promotion strategies that encourage development of leadership aspiration and competencies, yet balance them with reasonable promotion expectations and equitable advancement opportunities. This is an investment in the Air Force's future."[56]

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[56] AFDD 1-1, Leadership and Force Development, 18 February 2006

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